agreement with Reliance for uplifting their product. IBP's quantities are covered under the bilateral agreement between IOCL and RIL. The above agreement has enabled Public Sector Oil Companies to meet entire domestic demand of petroleum products which includes the Retail Outlet demand, out of indigenous production only which otherwise would have been imported.

Passing of subsidies to Oil PSUs

78. SHRI V.V. RAGHAVAN:

SHRI N.R. DASARI:

Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the public sector oil firms have been asked to bear the burden of subsidy on LPG and kerosene; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) and (b) PDS Kerosene and Domestic LPG are subsidized products. Considering that these products are domestic fuels of mass consumption, the Government has decided that the Oil Marketing Companies will not increase their selling prices during 2003-04. As a result, in addition to the Government subsidy available on these products, the public sector oil and gas companies are expected to absorb/share under-recoveries estimated to be around Rs. 8200 crore during the year 2003-04.

Splitting of IOC

79. SHRI V.V. RAGHAVAN:

SHRI N.R. DASARI:

Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are considering a proposal to split the Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) into three separate entities; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefore?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) and (b) While considering the judgement of the Supreme Court dated 16.9.2003 on HPCL & BPCL, the Government have decided to pursue the following three options simultaneously :

(i) to seek appropriate legal remedies;

(ii) to enact an appropriate legislation by building consensus; and

(iii) to explore the executive option of disinvesting the marketing arm of the Indian Oil Corporation Limited.

Option (iii) is still under preliminary stage of consideration and Government is yet to reach any final decision with regard to this option or its modalities.

Overseas Oil Projects

80. SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO : Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to refer to the reply to the Unstarred Question 76 given in the Rajya Sabha on the 18th February, 2003 and state whether any progress has been made in offshore exploration blocks in Myanmar?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRIMATI SUMITRA MAHAJAN): After February 2003, seismic data were acquired and interpreted and the location of the first exploratory well identified. Drilling of this well has commenced in mid-November 2003.

Exploration of Oil and Gas

†81. SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that petroleum/natural gas reserves have been found at several places recently;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) whether it is also a fact that most of the work related to extraction of the oil from these sources and refining thereof being given to foreign based companies?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRIMATI SUMITRA MAHAJAN): (a) and (b) During the year 2002-03, National Oil Companies, *viz.*, Oil and Natural Gas. Corporation Ltd. (ONGC) and Oil India Ltd. (OIL) and private/Joint Venture Companies have made 21 discoveries of small, medium and big size in Barmer Sanchor, Cambay, Jaisalmer, Krishna-Godavari Offshore, Mumbai Offshore and Upper Assam basins.

(c) No, Sir.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.